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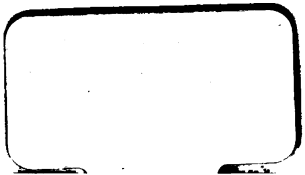

Corinne Roosevelt Robinson

THE CALL OF BROTHERHOOD

AND OTHER POEMS

THE
CALL OF BROTHERHOOD
AND OTHER POEMS

BY
CORINNE ROOSEVELT ROBINSON

SECOND EDITION

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1913

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
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Published October, 1912
Reprinted May, June, 1913

TO

FRANCES THEODORA PARSONS

THE FRIEND

TO WHOSE INSPIRATION AND COMPANIONSHIP

I OWE MY HAPPIEST HOURS

WITH BOOKS AND NATURE

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LIFE

THE CALL OF BROTHERHOOD

HAVE you heard it, the dominant call
Of the city's great cry, and the thrall
And the throb and the pulse of its life,
And the touch and the stir of its strife,
As, amid the dread dust and the din
It wages its battle of sin?
Have you felt in the crowds of the street
The echo of mutinous feet
As they march to their final release,
As they struggle and strive without peace?
Marching why, marching where, and to what!
Oh! by all that there is, or is not,
We must march too and shoulder to shoulder.
If a frail sister slip, we must hold her,
If a brother be lost in the strain
Of the infinite pitfalls of pain,
We must love him and lift him again.
For we are the Guarded, the Shielded,
And yet we have wavered and yielded
To the sins that we could not resist.

By the right of the joys we have missed,
By the right of the deeds left undone,
By the right of our victories won,
Perchance we their burdens may bear
As brothers, with right to our share.
The baby who pulls at the breast
With its pitiful purpose to wrest
The milk that has dried in the vein,
That is sapped by life's fever and drain—
The turbulent prisoners of toil,
Whose faces are black with the soil
And scarred with the sins of the soul,
Who are paying the terrible toll
Of the way they have chosen to tread,
As they march on in truculent dread,—
And the Old, and the Weary, who fall—
Oh! let us be one with them all!
By the infinite fear of our fears,
By the passionate pain of our tears,
Let us hold out our impotent hands,
Made strong by Jehovah's commands,
The God of the militant poor,
Who are stronger than we to endure,
Let us march in the front of the van
Of the Brotherhood valiant of Man!

VISION

FRIEND of the People, purposeful and strong,
You, who would right their wrong,
You, of the ardent eyes
That woo the glory of the further skies!
For the glad answer of a new sunrise
Must you then wait so long?

Oh! Man of Vision! though the rest be blind,
You, who do love Mankind,
You, who believe
That our fair Country shall indeed retrieve
The promise of the ages. You shall find
Your heart's reprieve.

With your own motto
"Spend and so be spent,"
Your high intent
Makes of yourself a willing instrument.

With heart and soul afire
You do aspire
But to be broken, should the cause require,
An arrow shattered ere the bow be bent!

What though the sordid sneer!
They may not hear
The cry of those
Who suffer the fierce throes
Of pain and hunger after deadly toil.
Your brothers of the soil
Follow your beacon light
Away from their dark night.

And in the end,
Though you be spent,
You, who were glad to spend,
Who would not be
A baffled Moses with the eyes to see
The far fruition of the Promised Land,
Who would not understand
How to lead captive dread Captivity,
Who would not even crave
A lost and lonely grave
Near Jordan's wave?

LINCOLN

A MARTYRED Saint, he lies upon his bier,
While, with one heart, the kneeling nation
weeps,
Until across the world the knowledge sweeps
That every sad and sacrificial tear
Waters the seed to patriot mourners dear,
That flowers in love of Country. He who reaps
The gift of martyrdom, forever keeps
His soul in love of man, and God's own fear.
Great Prototype benign of Brotherhood—
Incarnate of the One who walked the shore
Of lonely lakes in distant Galilee;
With patient purpose undismayed he stood,
Steadfast and unafraid, and calmly bore
A Nation's Cross to a new Calvary!

DEATH AND THE SCULPTOR

SUGGESTED BY DANIEL C. FRENCH'S RELIEF

MAY I not carve the message of thine eyes
That long 'neath adamantine brows is hid,
Oh! mighty Sphinx that near the Pyramid,
Beneath the glamour of Egyptian skies,
The riddle of the ages still defies?
Youth is my master—Dauntless Youth would bid
Me find the answer underneath thy lid
Where Life's solved mystery unwritten lies.
Lo! as I carve, I feel Death's ruthless hand,
And I, so young, must lay my instrument
Away with all my eager, ardent faith.
May it not be that one revealing wand
Alone can point us what the secret meant,—
Interpreter of Life—Thy name is Death!

AMFORTAS

I AM the Sinner, purer than the sin,
I am the Doer, worthier than the deed,
I am the Loser, who was meant to win,
I, the Forswearer, yet who loved the Creed.

I, the Inheritor of Holiness,
The knighted Guardian of the mystic Grail,
Lo! I am lost in deep and dire distress,
For I have loved the best, and yet could fail.

I was the bearer of the Holy Spear
But, through my sin, the sacred Thing I bore
Turned on my breast, and what I held most dear
Has left an anguished wound for evermore.

Mine was a soul freeborn to love the light
Astir with wingèd hope and high emprise,
Self slain, and chained to dark and dreadful night,
Though doomed to deathlessness, it faints and dies.

To love the right, and yield unto the wrong,
To have the best, and know it, yet to lose;
To be the weak, though born to be the strong,
To crave the pure, and yet the loathly choose.

Perchance the tortured terror which I bear
Forever burning in my bleeding breast
Shall purge my sin and win for me a share
In the Redeemer's gift of perfect rest.

I am the Sinner, purer than the sin,
I am the Doer, worthier than the deed,
I am the Loser, who was meant to win,
I, the Forswearer, yet who loved the Creed!

FATE'S DUEL

IT comes to all of us, or soon or late,
And we must buckle close our coat of mail;
Hand may not falter, nay, nor keen eye quail
Before the destined duel with our Fate!
And some who conquer, find they abdicate
The throne which was their joy; and some who fail
To win the battle, ardent still and pale,
Fight on,—nor will the angry Gods placate.—
But some, with visor down to hide the eyes
That looked upon a high love's shattered faith,
And some, whom Love relentlessly passed by,
Must battle without hope.—For them there lies
No eager glory in Life's sacrifice,
No victory except in loyal Death!

REMBRANDT'S POLISH RIDER

WITH careless ease, lithe, supple, lissome, free,
He sways the rein with adolescent grace,
And Youth is in the ardor of his face;
His eyes are wells of Life's expectancy,
The romance of the wonder yet to be!
What will he lose or win before his race
Is gained or lost? Shall honor or disgrace
Crown or defame his fine, fair chivalry?
Go, Rider! Fare unto the Golden West—
And though the Master, with unerring hand,
Hath fashioned that the frowning Dark Tower
stand
So sadly close—Fear not—your gallant breast
Shall never shrink before the prison wall—
No fetters could your spirit high enthrall!

MATERNITY

MY little one, thy mother's dreaming eyes
Dwell on thy nestling head against her breast
With that supreme and satisfied surprise,
Maternity achieved. The strange behest
Of Life infusèd and made animate,
Of soul incarnate, loosened from the spell
Of mortal matter, and sent forth elate
To wing its flight from that unfathomed cell
Whence it was born, unto the radiant sun
That ever beckons to a higher flight;
The golden goal for which the race is run,
The heavenly goal which is eternal light.
Oh! dreaming mother, dost thou recognize
The wingèd spirit in thy baby's eyes!

TO F. W.

SHE wore the crown of wife and motherhood
With noble dignity. Her limpid gaze
Could see beyond the weakness of men's ways,
And yet all human things she understood.
Not of the world, yet in it, for she would
Respond to Love's demands—or blame—or praise—
And spent herself in each succeeding day's
Fair opportunity for doing good.
Her lips had quaffed the Sacramental Wine
Of High Communion from her childhood's faith;
Her eyes had early visioned the Divine
And found in Christ the Conqueror of death.
Serene amid the clamor and the strife
She bore the lily of a blameless life!

MA BELLE

THE fine, fair cameo of her lovely face
Was like a perfect flower in tint and hue,
And from her being, breathed the nameless grace
Of sheltered woods and violets shy and blue.
She did not seem to know she was so fair;
Her tender cheek would flush with sweet surprise,
When, sometimes, we who loved her, praised her hair
Or prized the fawn-like beauty of her eyes.
Nor could we think too much of form or line,
Or dainty coloring. The radiant soul
That from those hazel eyes was wont to shine
Seemed to be one with God, and claimed the whole
Of Angel Sisterhood. Now, one of them,
We reach toward Heaven by her garment's hem!

FRIENDSHIP

THOUGH Love be deeper, Friendship is more wide;
Like some high plateau stretching limitless,
It may not feel the ultimate caress
Of sun-kissed peaks, remote and glorified,
But here the light, with gentler winds allied,
The broad horizon sweeps, till loneliness,
The cruel tyrant of the Soul's distress,
In such sweet company may not abide.
Friendship has vision though dear Love be blind,
And swift and full communion in the fair
Free flights of high and sudden ecstasy,
The broad excursions where, mind knit to mind,
And heart by heart renewed, can all things dare,
Lit by the fire of perfect sympathy.

STRETCH OUT YOUR HAND

STRETCH out your hand and take the world's wide gift
Of joy and beauty. Open wide your soul
Down to its utmost depths, and bare the whole
To Earth's prophetic dower of clouds that lift
Their clinging shadows from the sunlight's rift,—
The sapphire symphony of seas that roll
Full-breasted auguries from deep to shoal,
Borne from dim caverns on the salt spray's drift.
Open the windows of your wondering heart
To God's supreme creation; make it yours,
And give to other hearts your ample store;
For when the whole of you is but a part
Of joyous beauty such as e'er endures,
Only by giving can you gain the more!

A SONG OF THE BY-WAYS

I

I SING to the joy of the By-Ways,
The road that is grass overgrown,
That leads from the dust of the high-ways
To the meadow that never is mown;
The subtle seduction of places
Where Silence her magic has wrought,
And the Dream, or the Vision, effaces
The thralldom of thought.

II

The hour we wantonly wasted,
How rich in its passing, how fleet!
The fruit that we should not have tasted,
How perilous transient and sweet!
The dim and unfathomed recesses
Where flushes the bud of desire,
The swift, half acknowledged caresses,
The moth and the fire!

III

Then search for the flower that grows not
Except where the pathway is blind,
And the breath of the blossom that blows not
Where its beauty is easy to find;
The thrill of its scent aromatic
No gardens of ease ever give,—
Where Life is fulfilment ecstatic,
And to love is to live!

IV

For the Heart is the Lord of the By-Ways
And bids us forever to climb
To the distant and delicate shy-ways
Where even the Conqueror, Time,
Must pause on his march for a minute,
To yield us the consummate right
For the sake of the bliss that is in it
To our Dream of Delight.

MY COMRADE

I

ON a day when Youth was winging
Lo! I heard a comrade singing—
And he beckoned me and beckoned
Till I joined him on his way;
"Come," he said, "for Time is flying—
Age is hastening, Youth is dying—
Come and we will turn September
Back into the bloom of May!"

II

Oh! I thanked my Comrade kindly,
And I followed him right blindly,
He was such a merry fellow
As he sang his roundelay;
All my happy heart I showed him
For the fairy gift I owed him,
He who taught me that September
Still could hold the joy of May!

III

So, my Comrade, I was ready
With a spirit staunch and steady,
Quick to snatch the fickle moments
Of our fleeting holiday.
How we laughed, the hours whiling,
Though we knew that no beguiling
Could do aught but cheat September
With a masquerade of May!

. . . . . .

IV

Sometimes still I hear him calling,
But the autumn leaves are falling
And his voice has lost its lilting,
Luring music, blithe and gay—
And his song is faint and hollow,
For I may not rise and follow,
I who know that bleak November
Is a mockery of May!

SPRING

THE budding promise of recurrent Spring
Has filled my heart with all its primal fire,
And, like a flight of birds upon the wing,
It soars celestial with the wild desire
For all that was, when Youth and Love were young—
Ere Pain articulate had found a tongue.

There is a fragrance in the ambient air
That breathes of Resurrection; and the blue
Compelling canopy that arches fair
Above our heads, would bid us to renew
Our childhood's faith in Heaven's sapphire gate,
And once again our souls rededicate.

What if the holy fires of youth are shaken,
And burned to dust before Life's arid waste,—
One touch of Spring and all our veins awaken
And crave once more the lost delights to taste;—
Undying, and reborn, dim memories stir
The old, sweet pregnancy of days that were!

THE TRAIL TO WHITE TOP

I

OH! the trail that leads to White Top in the
merry month of May,
What a galaxy of beauty we shall find upon the
way.
There the haughty hemlock's shade is
Bending o'er the quaker ladies
In the gorge as deep as Hades where the lady
slippers stray!

II

Would you climb the dappled pathway toward the
misty mountain height
You must balance on your saddle, right to left,
and left to right—
For the branches stoop and press you
As a lover would caress you,
Begging only you confess you greet their ardor
with delight.

III

There the painted trillium glances from her trinity of leaves,
And her sister, the Wake-Robin, nods serenely and believes
That perchance her singing brother
On some rapid flight or other
Brushed her petals with a feather where the burnished crimson heaves.

IV

Near the rocks the wild azalea, flaring in an orange flame,
Leans above the mandrake blossom, hiding 'neath her leaf in shame—
And Clintonia Umbellata
Gleams beside the laughing water
Like a monarch's royal daughter who disdains a common name!

V

As we climb we see Elk Garden, with its broad and grassy sweep
And the crown of black old Balsam casting shadows long and deep,

But we mount forever higher
Where the wind plays like a lyre,
And the sunset's sudden fire falls on summits wild and steep.

VI

Here the delicate Spring beauty clambers up the mountain side,
And the wind flower swaying gently, pristine as a pallid bride,
White Top's children shyly peeping
From the undergrowth where creeping
Pine and fir their tryst are keeping, though we crush them as we ride.

VII

Now we scale the final hillock, and before our wondering eyes
Range on range of mountains rising from the valley to the skies,
Far unto the dim horizon—
Peak on peak the faint flush lies on,
And the young moon's shadow dies on myriad purple mysteries.

VIII

Oh! the trail that leads to White Top—When the
days are cold and gray,
And the winter nights are chilly, how I long to
wend my way
Back to Springtime and its glory,
There where Life's an untold story
On the trail to White Top hoary in the merry
month of May!

JUNE

THE frail felicity of April hours
Has yielded to the prescient joy of May—
And she, in turn, has laid her fragrant flowers
Upon the altar of this perfect day.
The spring with lavish hand her incense spilled,
An ardent acolyte to June fulfilled.

June in the meadow, lush with living green,
June on the hill side, soft with waving grain,
June in the rich completion of the scene,
June in the fulness of the thrush's strain—
And yet! Ah! June, must you, too, wend your way—
Have you no potent spell Time's hand to stay?

AFTER LONG LIFE

AFTER long life if I could be bereft
Of this Earth's passion and its endless pain,
And then, if I could live my life again
As one by Death forgotten and Youth left,
I wonder should I long, with all the deft
Desires of my now free, unshackled brain
To enter Life's arena? Should I gain—
No more 'twixt hope and mortal anguish cleft—
A disembodied view of soul and sense,
A swift solution of the mystery
Of Life's great pageant, and the poor pretense
Of Heaven's high-handed Inconsistency?
So visioned, would I still kneel unto God,
Or yield obeisance to the soulless sod?

THE GREAT QUESTION

MY heart is weary with the world's distress,
The cry of those who struggle in the night.
Oh! Lord, who sent thy Son for our redress,
We pray thee as of old "Let there be light!"
I would not ask the "Why" nor pierce the veil;
All that I long for is to know, behind
The torture, and the terror, and the wail
Of human woe, there is no cruel, blind,
Unreasoning chance, that hurls us here and there,
Victims of an insensate tyranny;
I would not ask the cause, but this my prayer—
To know there is a cause for misery;
Could I but see the working of Thy Hand
I should be willing not to understand!

PRAYER

GRANT me, oh! Lord, the attitude of prayer!
My joys, my griefs, my sins, to lay them all
At Thy dear feet!—I would not prostrate fall,
But I would have my spirit always there.
From such a vantage point, could I not bear
The fierce temptations which my heart enthrall,
And with Thy help so lift the heavy pall
Of anguished grief. Perchance if I could share
Each secret thought and raise it unto Thee,
Just as the dew is lifted from the flower
By the great Sun's benign compelling ray,
My faltering glance could so Thy beauty see,
Until my spirit drawn by Thy pure power
Would turn to prayer as night must turn to day.

DEATH

I AM the Master of the Secret Road,
Silent I stand behind the half closed door.
And you, who shrink the blind, black path before,
Though driven by the inexorable goad,
You, who have paid to Life the debt you owed,
Good coin or bad, from scant or ample store,
Poor Pilgrim, furtive-footed on my shore,
May it not be that I shall lift your load?
Then, with undaunted brow, come woo my eyes
And lay in mine nor cold, nor craven hand—
May you not thrill as one with sweet surprise
Who finds a friend beloved in alien land?
Perchance my face you thus shall recognize
And all my secrets fitly understand!

HEROISM

THE TITANIC

THE LUST FOR SPEED

PROLOGUE

I AM the Juggernaut
Crushing beneath my wheel
All that is finest wrought;
Iron and wood and steel
Shatter and writhe and reel,
Yielding before my greed—
I am the Lust for Speed!

What do I care for cries,
What unto me are throes,
What do I reck who dies—
I am the will of those,
Who from the phalanx rose,
Captains of business need—
I am the Lust for Speed!

Lo! I must make my way
O'er the vast Continent,
I must hold Time at bay,
Rush till the rails be rent
Reek from the girders bent,
Mine is the criminal deed—
I am the Lust for Speed.

And when the Ocean's toll
Reaches to hundred score,
When Death's defiant roll
Clamors for more and more
Than ever claimed before;
What though my victims plead—
I am the Lust for Speed!

I must the record break,
I must be ever first,
None shall my laurels take,
Mine is the burning thirst
Bred from the greed accursed;
Nor shall a rival lead—
I am the Lust for Speed!

ENVOI

Captains of Industry,
Pause but a single hour!
Those who so silent lie
Voice my malignant power;
This is their final dower,
Death and Despair decreed—
By the fell Lust for Speed.

PARTING

BELOVÈD, you must go—ask not to stay,—
You are a mother and your duties call,
And we, who have so long been all in all,
Must put the human side of life away.
For one brief moment let us stand and pray,
Sealed in the thought that whatsoe'er befall
We, who have known the freedom and the thrall
Of a great love, in death shall feel its sway.—
You, who must live, because of his dear need,
You are the one to bear the harder part—
Nay, do not cling—'tis time to say good-by.
Think of me then but as a spirit freed,
Flesh of my Flesh, and Heart of my own Heart,
The love we knew has made me strong to die!

TOGETHER

I CANNOT leave you, ask me not to go,
Love of my youth and all my older years—
We, who have met together smiles or tears,
Feeling that each did but make closer grow
The union of our hearts—Ah! say not so
That Death shall find us separate. All my fears
Are but to lose you. Life itself appears
A trifling thing—But one great truth I know,
When heart to heart has been so closely knit
That Flesh has been one Flesh and Soul one Soul,
Life is not life if they are rent apart,
And death unsevered is more exquisite
As we, who have known much, shall read the whole
Of Life's great secret on each other's heart.

THE MEN

WOMEN and children all
First to the boat!
Quick to the crucial call
Lower—and float—
Only a swift good-by,
Meeting—ah when?
And we are left to die—
We are the men!

Ours is the better fate,
Would we then live?
They, without son or mate—
May God forgive
This untold sacrifice.
Courage! again,
Under the starlit skies—
We are the men!

Steerage and financier
Answer the roll,
Each with his duty clear,
Peace to his soul,

Though the great ocean roar
Victor—what then!
Heroes for evermore,
We are the men!

TO A. W. B.

HERE'S to you, gallant friend,
Gentle and brave,
You, who full fathom deep
Lie 'neath the wave.
You were a soldier still
Up to the last,
Doing your Captain's will
As in the past.

Not from a bullet's flight,
Not under arms,
But in the Ocean's night
Of wild alarms.
Calm in the midst of fears,
Taking command,
Courage! in spite of tears
For Fatherland.

We who have known you long,
Gallant and gay,
First in the dance and song,
Pleasure and play,
Knew, too, the valiant soul
That would stand by
(Women and children first!)—
Ready to die!

THE ENGINEER!

I

WORK, work, work,
Down in the ship's deep hold.
Was there a man would shirk?
They of the tale untold;
Down by the hot flames fanned,
Theirs was the cruel part;
They of the tireless hand,
They of the dauntless heart!

II

"Boys! we must keep her straight,
She is a gallant boat,
Worthy a better fate,
Finest of all afloat—
Now, as the Wireless Call
Sweeps the encircling sea,
Here in this prisoned wall
It's up to you and me!"

III

Work, work, work,
Water is creeping higher,
Was there a man would shirk?
Engines must have their fire.
Up on the ship's great deck
Many are careless still,
They, in the deep hold's wreck,
Work with an iron will.

IV

Knowing they have no hope
When she must list and lunge,
Never a piece of rope,
Theirs is a fettered plunge,—

Fires are out,—and cold
Rises the fluent fear,—
Here's to the tale untold,
Here's to the Engineer!

THE WIRELESS TOWER

I

THE "ambulance call of the sea"
Winging its frenzied flight—
Hark! 'tis the C Q D
Rushed through the breathless night!
"Sister Ships, do you hear?
Hurry, turn on your trail.—
Is there none that is near?
Quick or your quest will fail!"

II

Like an insistent hand,
Searching the baffling dark,
Far from the tranquil land
Travels the gallant spark.

Fingers frozen and numb,
  Phillips, and pale young Bride—
"Hurry! Danger! and Come!"
  Working there side by side—

III

"Sister Ships, do you hear
  Carpathia, Olympic?" At last!
"Courage! have a good cheer—
  Lo! we are coming fast.
Turned on our tracks are we
  Sped with our utmost speed,
Over the icy sea,
  Racing to meet your need!"

IV

Whose is the pallid face?
  "Down we sink, by the head,
Boys! you may leave your place,
  Each for himself!" he said.
Fingers frozen and numb,
  Phillips, and pale young Bride—
Hist! to the doggèd hum,
  Working there side by side.

V

Hark! to the S O S
"Down we go, by the head—
Quick! we are in distress,
Hurry to aid," it said.—
"Phillips! we must not stay,
Come, there is no more time."
Yet does the Wireless play,
Beating its rhythmic rhyme,—

VI

"Down we go, by the head,"
Splutter—and dot—and dash—
Darkness! Peace to the Dead!
Silenced the dauntless flash.

THE BAND

I

THE boats are lowered, floating on the sea,
And as the men, with silent courage, stand,
Like to a battle call of minstrelsy,
A sudden volume sweeps. Oh! Gallant Band,—
Calmly, as if on terraced garden green,
The liquid music lifts to starlit skies,
As though the breathless horror of the scene
Were but a prelude unto Paradise.

II

The sweet, old hymn that every little child
Has learned to whisper at his mother's knee,
Perchance, at that dread moment, reconciled
Each doubting heart to meet Eternity.
The flute and cornet, cello, violin,
Not one was missing from the accustomed place,
And wafting sound, above the water's din,
Followed each warrior to his resting place.

III

No hope forlorn, by martial music led,
Was ever cheered by anthem more inspired;
Each hero, now amongst the deathless Dead,
Ready to meet his fate, with ardor fired,
Owed his last debt to those who, unafraid
Though face to face with Death that was to be,
With valiant hearts and hands so firmly played
Unto the end, their Requiem of the Sea!

LOVE

AWAKENING

THE tender glamour of the dreamy days
Before Love's full effulgence was complete
Dwells in my soul. The dim untrodden ways
That wooed our eager yet reluctant feet;
The mute communion of our meeting eyes,
The hand's elusive touch, when still no word
With its supreme significant surprise
The pregnant passions of our beings stirred;
The shadowy dawn of unawakened pain,
Love's counterpart, with its evasive thrill,
Haunted our hearts, and like the minor strain
Of some great anthem ere the sound is still,
Mingled with all the rapture yet to be
A note of anguish in its harmony!

LOVE HAS A MYRIAD OF WINNING WAYS

LOVE has a myriad of winning ways
Beside the wells of his deep tenderness,
The frolic of his fugitive caress
As in my hair his wanton finger strays,
The lyric laughter of his witching gaze
That draws my own, reluctant, to confess
The swift response that borders on distress,
So clearly it my willing heart betrays.
Love sometimes makes a petulant pretense
Of injured dignity that he doth feign,
As though, in truth, his wayward heart did swell
With artless ardor in his own defence,—
A playful parody of poignant pain,
Created only to enhance his spell!

LOVE IS A BEGGAR

LOVE is a beggar, most importunate,
Uncalled he comes and makes his dear demands.
He storms my heart which doth capitulate
And then he asks the homage of my hands.
He claims my eyes, and wistfully they turn,
He craves my lips, half-willingly they yield
Their soft obeisance to his own that burn
With potent passion in the power they wield.
And when, with woman's faith, I give my whole,
I wonder if dear Love doth recognize
That, with it all, unless he claim my soul,
He gives me naught and asks but sacrifice!
For Love, if Love be Love, should wish no dole,
Nor eyes, nor lips, nor heart, without the Soul!

ONE HOUR

I

SNATCHED from the greedy hand of ruthless Time,
We saved one hour of golden afternoon.
Oh! Love, it seemed our hearts, as one, did chime
In subtle symphony; and so in tune
Our spirits were, that speech was hardly part
Of the deep language of the happy heart.

II

The sunset lingered in the misty sky,
Till dim cloud shadows in the water grew,
And lilting reed-birds from the rushes, by
The gliding stream, across our vision flew,
With low, sweet cries, as though to thrill the ear
With the close thought that Nature was so near.

III

We seemed in unison with bird and flower,
At one with all the soft and sensuous light;
I thought of Danæ in her golden shower
And felt the God had claimed me as his right—
The terrible, strong God whom men call Love,
Who rules "the Earth below, the Heavens above!"

IV

And yet, in that sweet hour, the Soul was King!
And held the heart in pure and potent sway,—
And we can ever to that memory bring
The grateful knowledge that our perfect day,
With all its essence of a mortal union,
Was touched with high and Heavenly communion.

"AMOR SCONSOLATO"

WRITTEN FOR THE FIGURE CARVED BY PHILIP SMITH

THE broken lyre is lying at thy feet,
All hushed and mute the rich and vibrant strings—
Oh! Love disconsolate, with drooping wings,
Must thou forego the music once so sweet?
Yet that deep note, forever incomplete,
Its haunting melody through memory sings,—
Lost, unfulfilled, triumphant still it rings
Once perfect chord, soon silent, full but fleet!
My broken heart lies crushed within thy hand,
Dumb as the severed lyre's harmony,
No more a magnet to thy magic wand,
It lies inert—Lean, lowlier, Love! and see
The hidden symbol by thy sad wings fanned—
Death is Love's hostage—Immortality.

UNFULFILLED

I READ the pain and pathos of your eyes,
The aftermath of anguish in your smile,
And yet I can but envy you the while!
Your heart has bled, an ardent sacrifice
To Love's fulfilment. You have paid the price
Of keen, fierce living; nor can aught defile
The joys that once have been—they still beguile
The tear-swept memory that Time defies.
My soul's adventure, pallid, incomplete,
Has lingered in the twilight, for my heart
Has dwelt aloof in some dim atmosphere
Betwixt the Earth and Heaven. My alien feet
Have known nor Pain nor its great counterpart.
I, who have never loved, may shed no tear!

THE LESSER PART

HAD I been true to my deep loneliness,
Nor sought a lesser love to soothe my grief,
Had I been willing not to find relief,
But so to live, companioned by distress,
I, sometimes, to my inner soul confess
The fierce and inarticulate belief
That such despair forever held in fief
Could heal my spirit better than caress.
I have done nothing wrong—I only take
A human love that longed to lift my woe,
I only give a tender sympathy,
And yet—ah! yet, I sometimes long to wake
Alone, to taste again the bitter throe
Of loveless and unsolaced misery.

THE BETTER PART

I LOVED you and I lost you long ago,
And though the life within me wells in Spring
With sudden joy in every living thing,
'Tis but a fitful fever, for I know
I may not feel the glamour and the glow
That one dear presence never failed to bring;
And though my ravaged heart may sometimes sing,
Its music cannot lose the note of woe.
So though Love plead to give surcease from pain,
I would not have it otherwise. My heart
Would lose its life with its dear loneliness.
I am of those who may not love again,
Who find the bleeding wound the better part,
And Grief assuaged, but Grief without redress.

DISILLUSION

IF I could sleep and dream that love were true,
Had e'er been true, unsullied and supreme,
I'd gladly forfeit all the bliss I knew
And all I ever could know. Blessèd dream,
Lay on my weary eyes eternal sleep,
For now they never open but to weep—

If I could count from off their bitter span
The days of disillusion I have known,
The cruel knowledge that the heart of man
Has never climbed the heights, has never grown
Through passion purified to peaks sublime,
Would I not barter all that's left of Time?

IF SOME FAIR ANGEL

IF some fair angel from the Upper World,
With silent steps and pinions softly furled,
Could lay cool hands upon these tired eyes,
Once more the scalding tears might be empearled.

Perchance, if it could feel such sweet caress
The Heart could conquer its own bitterness,
And once again, through pity and through love,
The Soul be loosened from this dark distress!

LOVE AND UNFAITH

WE, who have loved, and from our Faith have faltered,
And made of love a desecrated thing,
How can we bear to face the God we've altered?
Like some great eagle on a broken wing,
No more our love can rise to heights transcendent
Where glows the light that ne'er on sea or shore
Has shone except for those whose love resplendent
Has lent them wings of fire on which to soar.
From that dim region which our souls inherit
We bore the promise of a pristine flame;
Alas! that we, who knew the holy Spirit,
Should clasp a lifeless ghost without a name.
How empty now the way through Heaven's portal,
Since Faith has failed and Love is not immortal!

LOVE AND FAITH

I laughed, and you echoed my laughter,
I wept, and you mirrored my tears,
But when life is over, and after
The tender enchantment of years,
Is there aught in high Heaven to discover
That our intimate joy may transcend,
For I found in the heart of a lover
The faith of a friend!

It may be the part that was spirit,
God lent as a shield for our fight,
And we who were worthy to bear it
Shall lift it aloft in our flight
To the ultimate regions of ether,
Where Faith holds the key to the throne,
And Love, kneeling proudly beneath her,
Our victory has won.

THE FORGOTTEN COUNTER-SIGN

LIFE met me on the threshold—young, divine,
And promised me unutterable things;
And Love, with fragrant greeting on his wings,
Looked in my eyes and laid his lips on mine,
And bade me quaff the magic of his wine
That deep delight, or disillusion brings.
Ah! had I kept my fair imaginings,
I had not lost the heavenly countersign;
The Shibboleth of soul supremacy;
The dower from my birth in higher spheres.
Then might I know the purer ecstasy
Of conquering Earth's test of alien tears,—
And Life, perchance, her promise might redeem,
And Love be more than a delusive dream!

THE FAILURE OF KING ARTHUR

EIGHT SONNETS

SHE SPEAKS

I

IF some fierce wind of hot and alien breath
Had swept the petals from my pure white rose,
I had been more content to watch the throes
Of such complete and devastating death,
Than to have seen it marred. For mortal faith
Accepts the wild tornado when it blows,
And, sooner than a bleeding wound discloses,
Lays on its buried hopes the final wreath.
But when the fitful gust of man's desire
Leaves on the spotless bloom of love a scar,
Barters its beauty for a transient hour
Of lesser love, that cannot claim the power
To wake within the breast a lasting fire—
Then must high Heaven mourn a fallen star!

II

Perchance I could have better borne the pain
Of knowing Love so infinitely frail,
Had it not been your hand that did disdain
To guard me from the falling of the flail.
I was secure in my sublime belief
That human passion bordered on divine.
How could I dream that you would be the thief
To rob my cup of its immortal wine?
Drained to the dregs, the empty glass I fling
Down the dim path of disillusioned years;
The Rose of Time is withered in its Spring,
The Wine of Life transfused in bitter tears,
And on my lips is left the tainted taste
Of Love once holy turned to wanton waste!

III

YOU, who have suffered much because I failed,
This bitter anguish you can never know—
To see in eyes you love the utter woe
Of one whose heart unto a cross is nailed.
Must those dear eyes forever be half veiled
As though afraid to meet the cruel blow
Of disillusion? Ah! how faint their glow—
Poor, martyred spirits by their love impaled.
Belovèd, I would give my days to this,
Could I but render back the joy you miss,
And lift the load I laid, the deep distress.
I, by whose hand your soul was rudely torn—
Is not my fate more frustrate and forlorn,
To rob the one I love of happiness?

IV

BELOVÈD, do you know that when you weep,
My heart weeps too in unison with tears
That water the lost joy of all our years?
Be it your will that I forever steep
My soul in this despair, I gladly reap
The pain I sowed and pay my Faith's arrears,
If I could but dispel your soul's sick fears
And for your spirit its sad vigil keep.
Teach me, my own, some ardent sacrifice
To win the gladness back to your dear eyes,
Some antidote to this eternal pain.
What would I give if I could bear a part
Of what I have inflicted on your heart,
And by my torture let you live again!

V

IN vain!—The punishment that I must bear,
The bitter price that I must always pay
Is that I cannot wash the stain away
Which I have made upon a love so fair.
I sometimes think, that, dark though the despair,
Which binds your being in relentless sway,
It does not your sad heart more fiercely slay
Than the remorse in mine beyond compare—
To give, and have the fulness of return,
To love as few have loved, and then to mar
That spotless love by a belittling scar
Which must a soul beloved forever burn.
What anguish can be greater than to know
One you would shield is bleeding from your blow!

VI

LOVE comes to me, and knocks at my sad heart,
And bids me let him in that he may heal
The cruel wound that will not cease to smart
Which Love himself has made. I would not steel
Myself against his dear and pleading voice,
Ah! no, with ardor would I fain forgive;
But, though I long with passion to rejoice,
And once again the old sweet rapture live,—
In vain! for naught can break the iron bars
That hold my prisoned and enfettered soul.
And I, who once was kin unto the stars,
Who soared triumphant to Life's utmost goal,
Must dwell in wingless depths because I know
Had Love been true I could not suffer so!

VII

I KNOW you love me still, for all the blue
And ardent glances of your tender eyes
Can never feign, or you would not be you;
And yet in your high heart you do despise
The thing I did, and swift resentments rise
That I, unto myself was so untrue,
That I could stain the perfect love I knew,
That I could so defile my life's set prize!
You love me, yes, and yet you hate the sin
Against our love's convincing purity;
I mourn with you for what I might have been,
High priest of loyal Love's security—
There is no thought that crucifies your heart
But in my vain regret doth bear its part.

VIII

BELOVÈD, you have taught me to forgive,—
Your strong and fervent effort to redeem
Has quickened my dead heart and made it live,
And though I mourn the glory of my dream
I see that my own love was faint and frail
To meet the disillusion of your need.
I could not bear to know that you could fail,
Nor have you lean where you were wont to lead—
But now you lead again. Your deep remorse
Has won my fainting soul to higher flight,
And all the bitter anguish and the loss
Have been the magnets to a purer light.
We, who have fallen but to rise again,
Perchance have won the victory of pain!

FRAGMENT

THE dreamy drift of honeysuckle scent,
A sensuous breath of beauty on the night—
And we who shared the intimate delight
Of Life and Love with youth and rapture blent!
For such complete communion we were meant—
To be but one in thought, and that thought right,
To love the lovely and to find the Light!

DEBT

WHAT do you owe me, Love of all my years?
Not love, ah! no, for love can not be owed.
Love must be free, accepted or bestowed,
E'en though we pay its price with bitter tears!

But this one debt you owe, that fearlessly
Your eyes shall meet the candor of my eyes;
No veiled untruth may desecrate the prize
Of a great love's untarnished memory!

TRUE LOVE IS SUCH A SWEET AND SACRED THING

TRUE love is such a sweet and sacred thing!
When I am with the One who understands,
I need not touch her lips nor clasp her hands,
Just to be near her makes my glad heart sing—
True love is such a sweet and sacred thing!

True love is such a sweet and sacred thing
That sometimes, when I cannot have a word,
I feel as though her tenderness I heard,
A full communion that the thought may bring—
True love is such a sweet and sacred thing!

True love is such a sweet and sacred thing
That often when my ardent spirit stirs
In rich and rhythmic unison with hers,
I almost hear its mystic murmuring—
True love is such a sweet and sacred thing!

True love is such a sweet and sacred thing
  That all of beauty is intensified,
  The world is so much fairer at her side,
So much more exquisite the bloom of Spring—
True love is such a sweet and sacred thing!

True love is such a sweet and sacred thing
  That even Death might lose for me its dread,
  If that dim hour could be interpreted
Through her pure soul that lifts me on its wing—
True love is such a sweet and sacred thing!

GRIEF

TO S. D. R.

GRIEF

I

THE hollow waking ere the cruel dawn
Has brought the fulness of my conscious pain,
The effort of the numb and weary brain
To know by what pale torture it is torn,
To comprehend the burden it has borne
Through fitful sleep, where ardent dreams would fain
Dispel the horror on the spirit lain,
And by fair visions cheat a fate forlorn.
Before I fully face the day's blank grief—
This misery of waking grips my soul,
Till fiercer anguish were perchance relief
And, better than so nebulous a goal,
The surer knowledge that no glad sunrise
Unrolls a radiant world to radiant eyes.

II

TO S. D. R.

BELOVÈD, from the hour that you were born
I loved you with the love whose birth is pain;
And now, that I have lost you, I must mourn
With mortal anguish, born of love again;
And so I know that Love and Pain are one,
Yet not one single joy would I forego.—
The very radiance of the tropic sun
Makes the dark night but darker here below.
Mine is no coward soul to count the cost;
The coin of love with lavish hand I spend,
And though the sunlight of my life is lost
And I must walk in shadow to the end,—
I gladly press the cross against my heart—
And welcome Pain, that is Love's counterpart!

III

PERCHANCE some day when we shall see the Whole
We may rejoice that he should thus depart,
With joy incarnate in his radiant soul
And one pure love, untarnished, in his heart;
For we, who near our life's relentless goal,
With tattered banners in our listless hands,
No more, head high, can answer to the Roll:
Our feet have slipped amid the shifting sands
Of standards lowered and illusions lost.
His is eternal dawn, no setting sun,
And we, so passion-driven—tempest-tossed—
May scarce regret his short, glad battle won.
And yet this anguished thought cannot be stilled—
So young, so loving, and so unfulfilled!

IV

TO HER

MY child in love, the beauty of your eyes
Holds in their ardent depths a poignant pain,
How many sad and sacramental sighs
Breathe through their glance and wring my heart again.
What would I give could I your burden bear
Mingled with mine; I would not sink below
All of your grief and all of your despair,
Could I but once again transform your woe
Into the joy whose promise fair you knew,
Birthright of love which his great love fulfilled;
Passion more pure, and faith more firm and true
Earth hath not known and Heaven hath not willed.—
And yet, perchance, could I your anguish lift
I should be robbing you of Life's best gift!

V

IMPOTENCE

TO HER

LOVE is so strong and yet so sadly weak!
When I behold the glory of your eyes
Sad with the sorrow which they may not speak—
Dim with the forfeit of their glad sunrise,
I long to hold and fashion all the years
Back to your birthright and away from tears.

II

I have had joy—Ah! would that it were yours—
I have known life and its broad vision—pain—
I have had love, the love that love allures;
If I could only give you all my gain,
There is no prize that I would set apart
Could it but help the healing of your heart.

VI

TO HIM

BLUE were thine eyes, reflections of the flower
That bids us not forget, nor dream that we
Can be forgotten by Love's mighty power.
Their lucid depths were wells of constancy.
Perchance this world had changed those ardent eyes
That met its call with loyal, level blue—
For it may be, alas! that Life belies
The promise that it gives when Love is true.
And so, although I weep these blinding tears
That fill my cup unto the bitter brim,
I can rejoice that the corroding years
Thy clear and crystal glance shall never dim.
Are we so frail that none can stand the test,
Can Death alone be true to Love's behest?

VII

HIS gift was Joy, and surely we must keep
The gift he brought, as tribute to our love;
And we must smile, with eyes that fain would weep
Hot tears of desolation, till we prove
That, through his sunshine, we have caught the gleam
Of radiance from a higher sphere than ours;
Just as, of old, his presence used to seem
To bring a sweeter fragrance to the flowers,
A keener beauty to the morning sky,
A lilt of laughter to the buoyant breeze!
So we must gather close his legacy
Of Love and Joy, and then, perchance, the Peace
Which passeth understanding shall abide
In our sad hearts until the eventide.

VIII

MARCH NINETEENTH

THIS is the day I held you to my breast
For the first time, and looked into the eyes
So soon to welcome with a gay surprise
The joy of life and all its ardent zest.
For, ere its severed span was rent, the best,
The most desirèd and achievèd prize,
The heart's high love that only true love buys,
Had crowned your youth with its divine behest.
I try to sate my longing with the thought
That you have known the beauty and the joy
Of Life and Love, without their bitter pain;
But as the miracle of Spring is wrought,
And its new birth doth Winter's death destroy,
My heart cries out for you to come again!

IX

FEBRUARY 21ST, 1909

THIS was the day I died, when all Life's sun
Was blotted out in dark and dreadful night.
And I, who lived and laughed and loved the light,
In one brief moment knew my race was run;
Knew that the glory of my days was done,
Because no more with happy, human sight
In your dear eyes could I read love aright,
No more could feel how closely we were one,
As we had been for all the perfect years
From boyhood till you came to man's estate;
My bliss is bartered now for blinding tears.
So young to die!—And Joy with step elate
Had chosen you her own. Love unafraid
Had brushed your lips with royal accolade!

X

FEBRUARY 21ST, 1912

CAN it be true the triple years have passed
With dull and laggard steps above your head,
And yet, my Own, I cannot make you dead!
Light of my life, the glamour that you cast
Is with me still—I hold it close and fast,
And, if from Earth it has not wholly fled,
May not the sunshine which your presence shed
Break through this leaden loneliness at last?
Not that I would my bitter pain deny,
For Love is Pain and I would pay its price,
The poignant price of what was once so sweet!
The Cross that Christ Himself did sanctify
Symbolled the ardor of Love's sacrifice,
And still can lift us, kneeling at His feet!

XI

HEART OF MY HEART

Heart of my heart,
If you could come again,
And I could look once more into the blue
Clear depths of your dear eyes whose soul I knew,
Should I be free of this eternal pain,
Heart of my heart?

Heart of my heart,
If I could kiss your brow,
The broad young brow that promised virile thought,
With lines of vital joy and ardor wrought,
Would such a kiss suffice me even now,
Heart of my heart?

Heart of my heart,
If I could hear your voice
And thrill to its clear tone with dazed delight,
Would all the world seem luminous and bright
And every living thing with me rejoice,
Heart of my heart?

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Heart of my heart,
If I could touch your hand
And feel its vibrant strength enclose my own,
I sometimes think the very touch alone
Would answer all my soul could e'er demand,
Heart of my heart?

Heart of my heart,
If this could ever be,
And all my loneliness were so forgot
In your dear presence, yet I could not blot
From out my heart this mortal misery,
Heart of my heart!

Heart of my heart,
To taste the depths I've known
Is to be part of this World's utter Woe.
How could I then forget the pain I know?
Pain and my heart so firmly knit have grown,
Heart of my heart!

Heart of my heart,
Not even your loved smile
Could ever wake my own to answering glee,

For, from the knowledge of Earth's agony,
No sweet reunion could my thoughts beguile,
Heart of my heart!

Heart of my heart,
My lips have drunk too deep
Of Marah's waters ever to forget.
All I can do, with eyes from anguish wet,
Is but to love and weep with those that weep,
Heart of my heart!

XII

THE GARDEN IN THE WOODS

THERE is a garden in a distant place,
In a far field where trees encircling grow,
And, often when the summer breezes blow,
I go alone to muse upon a face
That was my joy. White roses interlace
His resting spot the granite cross below.
There my dumb heart can sometimes voice its woe
And ask the healing of our dear Lord's grace.
The fragrance of the rose is as his youth,
The blue forget-me-nots reflect his eyes,
The deep dyed pansies are for memory.
In that sweet garden I can feel the truth
That all my love doth follow to the skies
And pledge the Spirit's immortality.

XIII

PAIN THE INTERPRETER

PAIN the Interpreter with level eyes
Has bound a crown of thorns upon my brow—
And bids me wear it valiantly, nor bow
A vanquished head before joy's sacrifice.

Pain the Interpreter with searching hand
Has probed my heart to all its pregnant woe,
That I may feel the world's titanic throe,
And all the Earth pain fitly understand.

Pain the Interpreter has seared my soul
Until its flame-swept vision may discern
The utter loneliness of souls that yearn
Through some deep anguish toward a distant goal